

Democratic-controlled North Carolina election board continues to block third parties from ballot

Jacob Crosse
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At a July 9 virtual meeting of the North Carolina State Board of Elections (NCSBE), the board refused to hold a vote on two parties it had previously blocked from appearing on the ballot, the We the People Party (WtP), which is running Robert F. Kennedy Jr., and the Justice for All Party (JFA), which is running Dr. Cornel West.

As of this writing, the board, with three Democrats and two Republicans, has yet to set a date for a future hearing and/or vote, although at the conclusion of the Tuesday's hearing, the chair of the board, Alan Hirsch, a Democrat, promised he would set one "promptly."

At its last meeting, held in June, the board voted 3-2 along party lines to block We the People Party, Justice for All Party and the far-right Constitution Party of North Carolina from appearing on the ballot. This is despite the fact that all three parties claimed to have submitted signature petitions exceeding the required minimum by the June 1 deadline.

In voting to deny ballot access to the parties, the Democratic board members cited complaints and objections raised by the North Carolina Democratic Party and Clear Choice Action, a Democratic PAC.

Clear Choice was created this year by billionaires aimed at blocking third parties from appearing on the ballot in order to boost the Democratic nominee, who for now is Joe Biden. The billionaires behind Clear Choice include venture capitalist Ron Conway and LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman. Conway has donated at least \$250,000 to the organization, while Hoffman seeded the group with at least \$125,000, according to Federal Election Commission forms filed earlier this year.

The billionaires' efforts to block third parties is part of an all out war the Democratic Party has launched to block the emergence of any left-wing, anti-war, or socialist challenge to the capitalist two-party system. Terrified that workers and youth will break with capitalist politics and parties, the ruling class is doing everything in its power to prevent voters from having a choice beyond the aspiring dictator Trump and the war

criminal Biden.

After complaints from the Clear Choice lawyers were heard at June's meeting, Democrats on the board voted not only to block WtP and JFA from the ballot, but also to investigate petitioners for WtP and JFA as well as to contact signatories to ascertain if they understood what the petition they had signed represented.

At the latest hearing, the board quickly voted to approve the far-right Constitution Party, which the Democrats had previously blocked over a technicality regarding an address. It then heard updates on the investigation into the WtP and the JFA from board staff members Lindsey Wakely and Paul Cox, a lawyer.

Wakely confirmed that the state attempted, and was still attempting, to contact signers of the petitions and interview them about their "understanding of the intent and the purpose of the party" and "how that was communicated to them."

In total, Wakely said the board staff interviewed 19 people who signed the petitions. Wakely admitted that it was difficult to reach signers and that out of 66 individuals reached who signed the JFA petition, staff members only spoke to 12 people who said they either "did not sign or did not recall signing" the JFA petition.

Wakely said they did not interview any individuals who signed the We the People petition who stated the same.

In a justification for refusing to set a vote, Hirsch claimed the board was still following up on these investigations, as well as nine subpoenas it issued.

The decision to not hold a vote for reinstating WtP and JFA was met with disapproval from Republican members on the board, including Kevin Lewis, who said he was "completely at a loss as to what is going on here," adding:

At the last meeting I thought we were going to

readdress these parties' situations today. We put our heads together and came up with a date.

And then, in the meantime somebody decided, "Well, let's go ahead and approve the Constitution Party but we are only going to have *updates* on the other two." And so I hear my update and we are talking about 9 or 10 that didn't remember, or 12, when the number of signatures is well above the statutory requirement. This isn't making a lot of sense to me.

Lewis accused the board of "bringing a lot of bad publicity to the board. Your motives are starting to be questioned."

The Republican board member added that he has received "emails from other parties, where the chairman from those other parties are saying we need to support democracy and have access to the ballot. I'm a little bit disappointed and at a loss at how this board is dragging its feet on this issue."

Fellow Republican board member, Stacy Eggers IV, concurred, saying, "We have received a number of documents, and we generally don't second guess voters on their decisions and should not do so in this case." Eggers confirmed that both parties were "well above" the signature threshold.

Hirsch said that the board staff was "continuing to make phone calls" and that they "haven't had a chance to review the material." He continued: "As chair I have the authority to set a meeting, and I promise we will do that promptly in plenty of time to get these folks on the ballot, *should they be approved as parties.*" [Emphasis added].

In an email with this reporter, Jeff Scott, a member of the We the People Party who is running for state Senate in North Carolina, confirmed that Clear Choice is "attempting to do to the Justice for All, and We the People parties what they did to the Greens two years ago."

In 2022, the Democrats engaged in an illegal scheme to bully Green Party Senate candidate Matthew Hoh off the ballot after his campaign had gathered the required number of signatures. In order to strike Hoh's signatures, Democratic-linked operatives harassed signatories, repeatedly calling them in order to convince them to recant their signature.

Scott estimated the Democrats were only fined around "\$10,000 to delay and demoralize the Greens, and [the Democrats] probably consider it money well spent.

"They are doing the same thing now, and none of the major press calls out the funders of this anti-democratic initiative," he added.

Mirroring the tactics used by the Democrats in 2022, Scott confirmed that Clear Choice Action, as part of the campaign to get WtP off the ballot, texted WtP signatories a survey. The survey asked multiple questions about the petition process, including:

- Did the person who asked you to sign pressure you in any way, or offer you something in return for your signature?
- Do you want RFK Jr. to be on the 2024 presidential ballot?
- Are you sure? If RFK's name is on the ballot it could help Donald Trump's chances in the election?

Scott wrote that the three Democrats on the board pretend to be "concerned about signatures, petitioner dialogue with signers, potential misrepresentations, etc." He continued:

They whine about voter access, voting rights expansion, more early voting... and then turn right around to become tyrannical scolds on signatures and voter communications when it suits them.

Their behavior is that of petulant partisans who think independent candidates literally (yes, I mean literally) STEAL votes from their preferred candidate. That is the Democratic National Committee's feverish claim this year, as in years past. Republican National Committee does it too.

In a statement posted on X/Twitter earlier this year, Socialist Equality Party candidate for president Joseph Kishore denounced efforts to block third parties from the ballot. He wrote:

Despite our deep political differences... We support the right of all independent and third party candidates to get on the ballot.

The Democrats' attack on the most basic right, the right to vote, exposes the fraud that they are a "democratic" alternative to the fascistic Trump. The Democrats and Republicans represent two factions of the corporate and financial oligarchy.



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